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TAPSTRY IV (Seventeen Feet Wide)
Cyrus captures his grandfather, Astyages

—Courtesy P. W. French & Co.



TAPESTRY I (Eight Feet, Six Inches Wide)
Harpagus gives the infant Cyrus to the shepherd Mithridates
—Courtesy P. W. French & Co.

The Story of Cyrus the Great

By Special Correspondent

ONE of the most interesting series of tapestries in existence is that recently sold by P. W. French & Company to grace the walls of the Harvard Club, New York. This set of Cyrus the Great tapestries, signed with the Brussels mark and the monogram GM, was woven at Brussels, in the first half of the seventeenth century, by Michel van Glabeke. It is one of the few sets ever executed to picture the Story of Cyrus, the only other important surviving set being the Renaissance one in the Royal Spanish Collection. Both sets have Latin apothegms in the bottom border appropriate to the story. The

one in the tapestries before us is: *Robue et uis Prudentie Iuncta Omnia Superant*, which, translated, reads: "Strength and Force united to Wisdom Conquer all Things."

Border and panels are in all details of style characteristic of the period. The costumes are based on Roman, with seventeenth century adaptations. The use of the Roman ax and fasces in tapestry IV; and of the double eagle of the Holy Roman Empire, on the stomacher of Cyrus in tapestries III, IV, VII, though anachronistic to the extreme, is in keeping with similar anachronisms of other tapestries of the period.



TAPESTRY II
Mithridates gives the infant Cyrus to his wife
(Eight Feet, Six Inches Wide)

—Courtesy P. W. French & Co.

Until the middle of the sixth century B. C., the name Persian was confined to the tribes inhabiting the southwestern part of what is now called Persia. They were subject to the Medes who inhabited the northwestern part of the same country. The king of the Medes was Astyages (B. C. 584-550). Astyages had a daughter, Mandane, married to Cambyses, the leader of a clan of one of the Persian tribes. Astyages dreamed that he saw grow from Mandane's body a vine that covered all Asia. The Magi (Wise Men) declared that this meant Mandane's son would take away his grandfather's crown. To prevent this, Astyages sent for his daughter to visit him, and when the child Cyrus was born, gave it to his prime-minister, Harpagus, with instructions to have it put to death. Harpagus gave Cyrus to a shepherd, Mithridates (*tapestry I*) with instructions to expose him on a moun-

tain frequented with wild beasts. Mithridates took the child home to his wife (*tapestry II*) who had just given birth to a dead child. This she exposed instead of Mandane's son, and brought him up among the shepherds as her own son. When Cyrus reached the age of ten, he was one day chosen king by his playmates, and as king had one of the boys beaten who refused to obey him. The boy's father complained to Astyages, who summoned Cyrus into his presence, and recognized him by his features and his proud spirit as the son of Mandane. Harpagus and the shepherd, when called before the king, admitted the truth. Astyages pardoned the shepherd, but inflicted on Harpagus a cruel and barbarous punishment that the latter never forgot. As for Cyrus, the Magi said the dream had been accomplished when Cyrus was chosen king by playmates. So Astyages,



TAPESTRY III (Twelve Feet, Six Inches Wide)
Cyrus, with the help of Harpagus, conquers the Medes

—Courtesy P. W. French & Co.

fearing him no more, sent him to Mandane and Cambyses, who received him as one raised from the dead. When Cyrus came of age, Harpagus, who nursed a bitter desire for revenge on Astyages, sent a secret message to Cyrus, bidding him put himself at the head of the Persians and shake off the yoke of the Medes, who being weary of the tyranny of their king, would offer little resistance. Cyrus found the suggestion good, and acted upon it. When Astyages learned that Cyrus was organizing rebellion among the Persians, he raised an army, at the head of which he placed Harpagus. When the armies met, Harpagus, followed by most of his troops, deserted to Cyrus. Astyages then raised another army, in order to resist the invaders. Cyrus and

Harpagus, after a long campaign (*tapestry III*), finally captured Astyages himself (*tapestry IV*), who passed the rest of his life as the subject of his own grandson.

Thus did the empire of the Persians succeed that of the Medes in the year 550 B. C. Jealous of Cyrus, the other great powers, Babylon, Egypt, Sparta, and Lydia, decided to combine against him in 546 B. C. under the leadership of the Lydian king, Croesus. Cyrus attacked and defeated Croesus before the others arrived (*tapestry I*) and made Lydia a Persian province. In B. C. 539, Cyrus defeated the Babylonian, and annexed that mighty state to Persia. From the beginning of B. C. 538, Cyrus describes himself as "King of Babylonia and King of the Countries" (*i. e.*



TAPESTRY V (Twelve Feet, Eight Inches Wide)
Cyrus defeats and captures Croesus, King of Lydia

—Courtesy P. W. French & Co.

of the world). That same year he set free the Jews (*tapestry VI*), whom Nebuchadnezzar had transported to Babylonia. He also allowed them to return to Palestine and rebuild the temple at Jerusalem. Later, wishing to extend his empire farther to the east, he sent a messenger to Tomyris, Queen of the Massagetae in Central Asia, east of the Caspian Sea, asking her hand in marriage (*tapestry VII*). She, desiring to keep the throne for her young son, refused the offer. In the war that followed, Cyrus was defeated and killed, but the empire he had created lived after him.

The tapestries, seven in number, picture the most dramatic incidents of the career of Cyrus. They are hung at an average height of eleven feet, six inches and are particularly effective in their present setting.

Harry B. Lachman Sails for War Zone— Among the American artists who are willing to brave the perils of the sea in these uncertain times, in order to return to favorite sketching grounds in Europe, is Harry B. Lachman, who recently sailed for France. Mr. Lachman will be remembered as the brilliant young painter whose exhibitions in New York, Chicago and throughout the South attracted so much favorable comment. He was of the American colony of artists who remained in Paris for some months after the outbreak of the war, bringing back many interesting souvenirs of the great Capitol in its hours of fortitude. His photographs of French children, and toys made by French artists, which he sold for the benefit of war charities, contributed a novel and touching note to the holiday season.



TAPESTRY VI (Fifteen Feet Wide)

Cyrus frees the Jews, gives them permission to rebuild their temple at Jerusalem, and returns to them the sacred utensils of which Nebuchadnezzar had robbed them

—Courtesy P. W. French & Co.

One wonders what the effect will be upon this active young man and his vital, dashing art, of all the gloom and ruin which it may be his lot to see. A lover of cosy, home-like villages, nestling amid sheltering hills or in peaceful valleys, how will he feel toward those same abodes of the simple and home-loving, shattered and blackened by war?

The spirit of adventure is strong in young men, enthusiasm and sympathy are traits of the artistic temperament and we may therefore expect from our artists, who are now returning to Europe, a new point of view on the war and its aftermath. What they shall

do now abroad will be a contribution to history as well as to art. Even though they do not see those portions of the country that have actually been ravished by the conflict, they will, nevertheless, feel its effects and the atmosphere of the country; the sentiments of its people are bound to affect the style of the artist and be recorded thereby in his works.

We can only wish them safe passage on a neutral vessel and trust to the Higher Powers who guide the destinies of men that whatever changes they may undergo will be for the betterment of society as well as art.



*TAPESTRY VII (Ten Feet, Ten Inches Wide)
The messenger of Cyrus before Queen Tomyris*

—Courtesy P. W. French & Co.